

# ALAMO FLY FISHERS

## NEWSLETTER

Issue XVII, No. 3

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## Back to the Basics with a Bend Back

By Steven Flanagan

With all the new developments in the fly tying arena occasionally one should consider going backwards to look for a fly that has stood the test of time. One such fly is the Bend Back. Originally designed for bass fishing in the southern states in the early 1900's, the Bend Back has become a standard in many a fly fisher's salt water arsenal. Chico Fernandez can be credited with pushing this fly into salt water fly fishing. In the early 60's, Chico began fishing this fly effectively in the mangroves of the Florida coast. Lefty Kreh lists this as one of the flies that every salt water angler should have in their box. Numerous other famous fly fishers have listed this fly as one of the flies that they will not venture into the Florida Everglades nor the Texas flats without.

If I were asked which fly that I would go to day in and day out when pursuing Redfish on the South Texas flats, I would say the Bend Back. I find myself choosing the Bend Back because of its weedless properties. By design the Bend Back can be cast into the weeds along the edges of the flats or into the fine grass around the pot holes in the flats without fear of catching grass on each cast. Many offshore anglers use a Bend Back with a high density sinking line around floating weed beds when fishing for Dorado. By casting the Bend Back fly and leader onto the weed bed, the sinking line will pull the fly off the weed bed towards the bottom which often provokes savage strikes from fish holding below the weed beds. Many fly fishers will cast a Bend Back fly upon a shore line adjacent to a channel or cut and let a sinking line pull the fly back into the deeper water, dropping along the edge of the drop-off. This

technique can be very effective when fish are holding off the flats in the warmer water of a channel in the winter.

The Bend Back gets its name from the bend that the tyer puts into the hook shank before tying the fly. The hook is bent slightly at the eye to help the fly roll over to an inverted angle. With the hook point riding up, and a buck tail wing flowing back, over the hook point, the fly slides unobstructed through grass and other fish hiding cover. A tyer can cover the hook shank with chenille, tinsel, or other materials that can easily be wrapped over the hook shank. To prevent snagging oyster shell or coral, many tiers leave the hook shank bare. ■

## MONTANA REEL WOMAN PRESENTATION

By Clay Gill  
Vice President – Alamo Fly Fishers

Carol Jo Williams came to visit during the February meeting, and we were charmed and entertained by her ESPN video series presentation. Carol is a friend of Jimmy Moses who worked to put this outstanding treatise of the Rockies together. The fly-fishing presentation, and Reel Woman Guide school overview riveted the large crowd for this meeting. We thank Carol Jo Williams and sincerely hope Carol and her family will join our club in the future.

The winter has dragged on this year and anyone who has pull with Steve Brown, please have him order up some fish spawning weather. This late winter is getting old!

Take a kid fishing soon, and check out the big smiles. ■

# THE PRESIDENT'S POINT OF VIEW

By David Uhler  
President — Alamo Fly Fishers

Those of us who live paycheck to paycheck know the drill.

First, you assemble all of your bills at the end of the month. Then you prioritize.

There's the mortgage payment – gotta make sure we hang onto the house! – that tops the list. Then there are the bills for other essentials, such as electricity, the gas and the water, followed by the monthly payment on the truck, the credit card statements and everything else.

Okay. With all of the bills in hand, it's time to go to the checkbook.

Whoa! Imagine for a moment that instead of the money you thought you had tucked away in the bank, you've got just half as much instead. Would that ruin your day or what?

We've got a similar financial dilemma here at Alamo Fly Fishers.

Now, I'm not saying we're going broke or anything. AFF is definitely NOT going the way of Enron. As of this week, however, three months into 2002, we've got just 40 AFF members who have paid their annual club dues instead of the 80 or so we had last year.

What does this mean to the club?

Like you and your household, AFF has a number of fixed expenses. For instance, we've got to pay rent for the hall where we hold our monthly meetings and fly tying sessions.

We've got to pay for our mailbox at the local post office. We've got obligations to the Federation of Fly Fishers; since we're an FFF affiliate club, we have to pay a "head tax" to FFF for every one of our members. The list of our financial obligations goes on and on. And I'm not even including things like stocking programs and expenses for some of the speakers we bring to our monthly meetings.

So, to those who have already paid their 2002 dues, I'd like to say "thanks." And to everyone else, please get those dues checks in so we can keep AFF strong.

On a more positive note, we DID put \$150 in the bank after our Bud Priddy fly raffle at our February monthly meeting. I'd like to thank Bud's wife, Pat, for the generous donation of 11 flies tied by her late husband. Bud, one of the founding fathers of AFF, was

an avid fisherman and a helluva fly tier. His flies are real collector's items.

Club member Jon King nearly cornered the market, with three winning tickets in the raffle. Congratulations, Jon, and thanks to everyone who continues to support our club and the sport we love. ■

## Casting clinic nets newcomers

By David Uhler  
President — Alamo Fly Fishers

It felt like a day at the coast -- hot, sunny and real breezy.

Instead of the Land Cut or Copano Bay, however, the action on Feb. 23 was at an AFF fly casting clinic on a soccer field at Cambridge Elementary School in Alamo Heights.

About half dozen people who had never before touched a fly rod turned out, along with an equal number with some casting experience who wanted to improve their skills.

Thanks to all of the AFF members who helped host the clinic, including Buddy Robichaux, "Lefty Ray" Chapa, Bruce Nelson, Jon King, John Marfin and David Uhler. ■

### Calendar of Events

**March 15-17 –White Bass Fishing  
the Colorado River**  
**April 20 -- Stocking Bluegills  
in the Nueces River**

### APRIL OUTING

By Buddy Robichaux

Barring any unforeseen circumstances, we will do it again--stock the Nueces River. This time we'll put Bluegills in. Maybe we are just feeding the Bass that we put in last October, or maybe we are increasing the catch. But either way, we are improving the river and making friends of the local landowners. We will meet at the Camp Wood city park on April 20 at 10 am. Stocking should be done by noon. Then we can fish the river for the Bass from last Fall. Be sure to attend the April club meeting for last minute details. ■



# WHY CATCH AND RELEASE?

By Clay Gill

Vice President – Alamo Fly Fishers

Recently I watched a conversation turn to debate over catch and release. A spirited position was taken that an occasional big fish in the creel will not hurt anything. No argument here from me. Whether it was bait for argument or an honest point made, it did get us all going on the issues.

There was time decades ago when I was like most others. We kept our limits when the fish cooperated. During a tournament, heaven help a large fish destined for weigh-in. As time went on, many of our mindsets changed. Most of us evolved and became sensitive to the destructiveness.

Thanks to conservation minded legislators, utilizing scientific data and expert recommendations, the fish populations are now better than ever in many cases. Slot and size limits have restored a common sense approach to the plunder of the past. Netting and over fishing commercially, along with overly liberalized limits for the renewable resource, having gone unchecked, was bankrupting the game for everyone. Fifty or more years ago, people kept everything, and ate them all. Considering the growing numbers of boaters, licensed fisherman, and enthusiasts, stringent measures have become a necessity to preserve something for future generations.

We can no longer remain ambivalent to the needs for limits and innovations like slots for the allowance of certain fish to attain maturity and spawn. The boon in coastal fishing in the Laguna Madre is evidence of this issue. The bays now have Redfish and Trout in abundance courtesy of the net ban and projects by the Coastal Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife. Additionally, organizations like the Coastal Conservation Association pour private monies into the preservation bucket.

The rub will kick in when the casual fisherman and guides alike must reduce the daily limit, as is being considered now. Guides will become hard pressed to charge the near five hundred dollars for a party on the flats, and multi species catch will become a premium priority to justify the cost. Proposed limit reductions have been considered for some time and surely will become a hotbed of discussion and controversy. Some

will claim to loose, while others claim to be winners. All things considered, progress is progress. Just how you balance this is the tricky part.

Television fishing shows depict catch and release constantly, and education has become the best tool to get the message out. The last thing we need is to find the horse when we should have been fixing the gate. Involvement can start by the careful handling of that next large fish you cross paths with. Respectfully ease it back to the nursery that provided that luxury in the first place. This respect and admiration for the resource can and will make a difference in the future. Education is the key to success.

I remember Port Aransas where I lived as a young person. Solitude prevailed there on all but busy holidays, and summer weekends. A look there now on any Saturday or Sunday reveals the drastic increase in boat traffic and fishing pressure on the same spaces and places. It is a small wonder how regulation and technology has given us increase in renewable fishing resources under such pressure. The boats virtually line up now along the Laguna. Finding an unoccupied tidal lake takes a half-hour boat ride on a Saturday. Every day brings in new high technology fishing guides who fish seven days a week. Many of these guides are making two trips a day, and catching a limit to give each group. Restrictive measures will result when the plunder becomes evident and sport fishing increases with the population.

To make a difference, one could start by educating sportsmen on the issues. As a practice, we can begin by keeping nothing or only enough legal fish to eat that day, releasing the larger mature breeders.

Fly fishermen do very little damage as a rule. They commonly practice sound principals of conservation. Everyone will eventually be penalized if over indulgence goes unchecked. This mentality seemed to work ages ago, but not now. We are not in a depression, and fillets are cheap at HEB. Everyone must become involved in some way.

Slide that next thirty-inch Redfish or Trout back into the Laguna and see how good it feels. It can be contagious. The next time you pole along that widgeon grass, the speckled beauty you hook up on may be a Texas record that you released last year. Tight lines and leave those places we visit better than we find them. ■

# UPPER GUADALUPE BASS BONANZA

By Clay Gill  
Vice President – Alamo Fly Fishers

Rick Cathey of Texas Cajun Outfitters will return this year with his “Fishing Texas” Bass bonanza video, filmed on the upper Guadalupe River last summer. The video will expose a section of the river he drifts by kayak for some amazing action, and shown on television this spring. Rick has been guiding on the Texas coast and will also fill us in on the action in the Laguna Madre, over the last few months.

Rick specializes in fishing “holes” during the winter, and with his approach, rarely sees a lull in the action. Bring a friend to this one and learn some new techniques and locations to fish. ■

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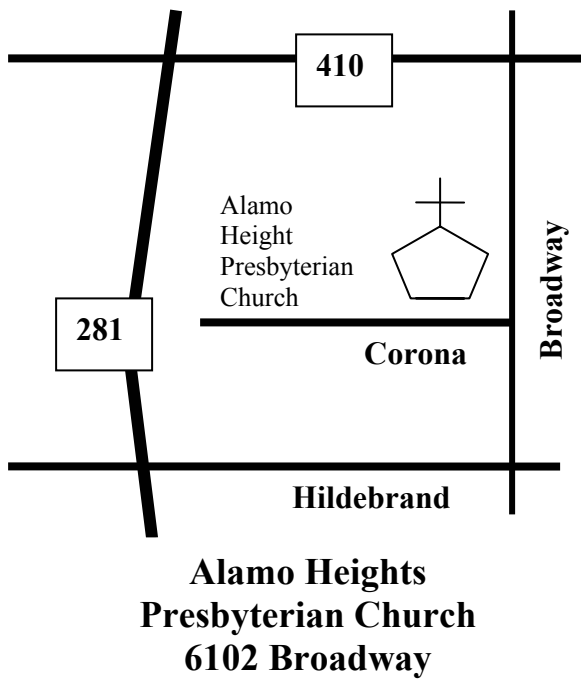
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**Fishing, quite simply becomes a  
tranquil food for the soul ....**

**---Monte Montgomery**

## Where to Find Us



## Regular Activities

**Meetings** are held the third Tuesday of every month, 7 p.m. at Alamo Heights Presbyterian Church, 6201 Broadway.

**Fly tying sessions** are held every Tuesday at 7 p.m., with the exception of meeting night. Bring your vise and tying gear or just come and share in the discussion.

### Alamo Fly Fishers club officers

David Uhler	President	250-3448
Clay Gill	Vice-Pres.	491-0555
Ed Niehaus	Treasurer	829-4011
Bill Slough	Outings	826-6697
Buddy Robichaux	Education	492-7125
Mike Richards	Newsletter	641-7268